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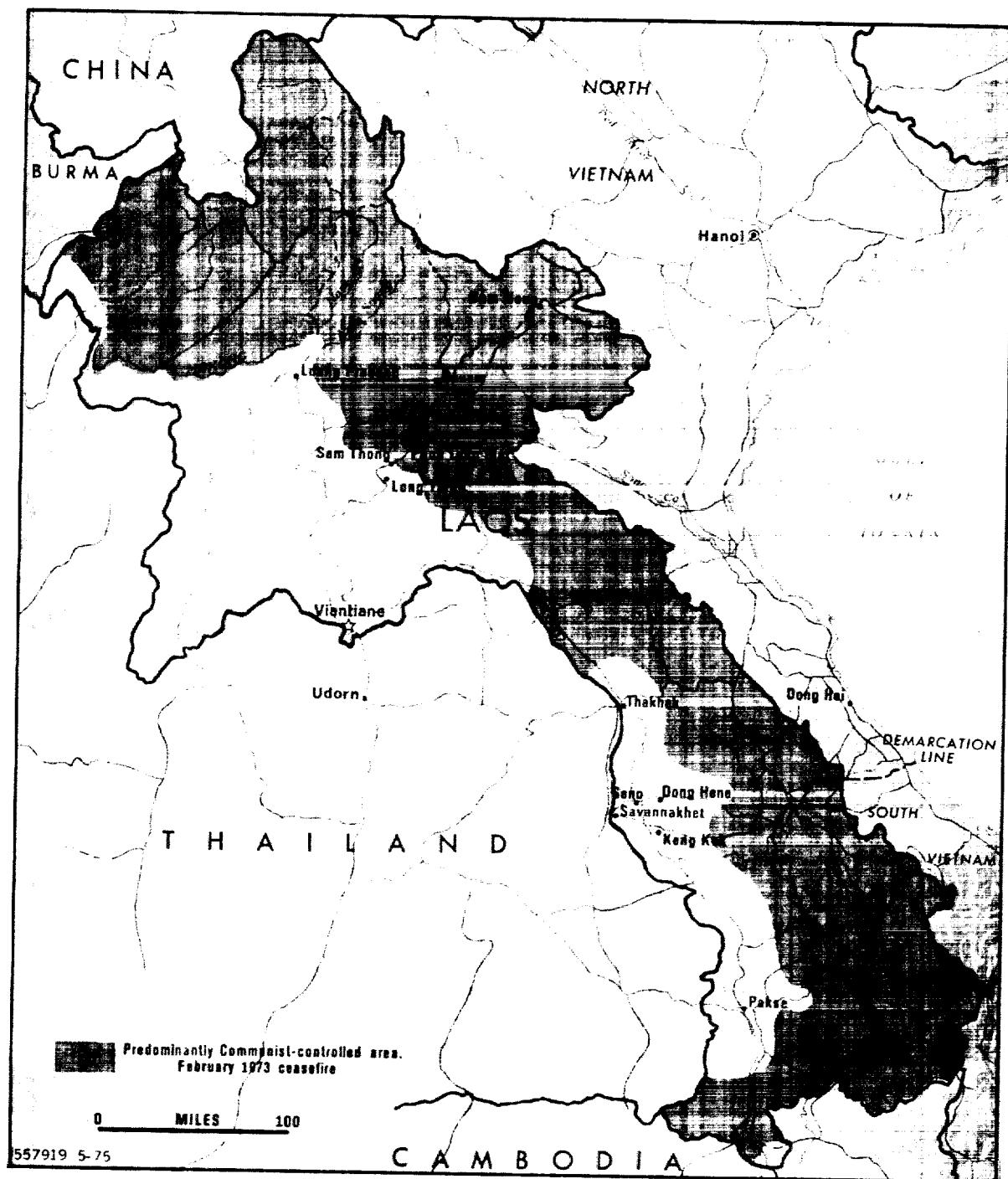
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LAOS

Communist-inspired demonstrations against the US erupted in Vientiane again last night.

About 200 demonstrators—including Lao employees of USAID, students, and some communist agitators—entered the main AID and defense attache compound before dawn today and sealed it off. As of mid-morning Vientiane time, the demonstrators had broken into the commissary and the American community center; some looting had occurred, and several vehicles had been damaged. The demonstrators had not entered the main offices where three US personnel—two Marines and a civilian—were holed up. Units of the capital's joint police force—consisting mostly of Pathet Lao—were outside the compound but had made no effort to interfere with the protesters.

The demonstrators have set up loudspeakers outside the compound and are carrying signs denouncing AID and the CIA. They have also issued two communiqus. Their demands include:

- abrogation of all "unequal" US-Lao agreements, particularly the 1951 aid agreement;
- dissolution of the AID organization;
- departure of all American AID employees within three days;
- transfer of all AID facilities and equipment to the coalition government.

Demonstrators also seized the AID warehouse just outside the capital, and some protesters stationed themselves at the entrance to the nearby American housing area. Americans were being allowed to enter and leave the housing area, but vehicles are being checked. Police units were present but were not interfering. So far, there have been no incidents at the US embassy.

US Charge Chapman telephoned Interior Minister Pheng Phongsavan early this morning, initially to ask for police protection and later to protest inaction on the part of the police. The charge also delivered an oral protest to Foreign Minister Phoumi Vongvichit, who professed surprise at the developments. At mid-morning, acting AID director Ramsey met with Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, Foreign Minister Phoumi, and Minister of Economy Soth Phetrasy. These senior Lao officials would not promise to halt the demonstrations, but they did make assurances for the safety of US personnel.

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In the provinces, the Pathet Lao are moving rapidly to establish control over non-communist areas of Laos, despite their apparent willingness to maintain—at least for the time being—the trappings of a center-left coalition government in Vientiane.

Pathet Lao combat troops have now occupied virtually every important former rightist area in central and southern Laos. No resistance from non-communist forces has been reported.

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[Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma yesterday assured the US charge that neutralist Interior Minister Pheng Phongsavan and his Pathet Lao deputy, Deuane Sonnarath, would definitely go to Savannakhet today, now that "our troops" have secured the city. In the charge's view, this slip of the tongue by Souvanna is the clearest evidence to date of his endorsement of recent Pathet Lao actions. Pheng's and Deuane's presence in Savannakhet should help appease the demonstrators and secure the release of all Americans.]

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On the domestic political scene in Vientiane, Prime Minister Souvanna convened an emergency meeting of the coalition cabinet earlier this week to select replacements for recently ousted rightist ministers and secretaries of state. In a surprise announcement, Souvanna named neutralist Interior Minister Pheng Phongsavan to replace Sisouk na Champassak as minister of defense. This presumably means that "acting" Pathet Lao Defense Minister Khammouane Boupha will return to his old number-two position at the ministry.

Noncontroversial non-communists were also named to replace Pheng at interior and to fill the remaining vacancies at finance, foreign affairs, and public works. Souvanna has, in addition, selected his nephew and personal physician as a tentative replacement for rightist Health Minister Khamphay Abhay, in the likely event that Khamphay decides not to return to Laos from his present mission to Geneva.

Communist Deputy Prime Minister Phoumi Vongvichit, who Souvanna claims approved all of his selections, apparently made no effort to have Pathet Lao officials fill the vacant posts—all of which were allocated to the non-communists under the

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terms of the 1973 peace accords. This would appear to be another indication that the Pathet Lao are prepared, for the moment at least, to maintain the coalition facade. [redacted]

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Souvanna also announced at the cabinet meeting that he had reached agreement with his Pathet Lao deputy Phoumi to expand the membership of the coalition's Joint National Political Council from 42 to 72 delegates and to convert that body into a legislative replacement for the recently dissolved, rightist-dominated National Assembly. The additional delegates, according to the Prime Minister, will be evenly divided between the non-communists, the Pathet Lao, and the so-called "qualified neutralists."

Transformation of the political council, which is chaired and dominated by communist leader Souphanouvong, into a legislative assembly has been a major goal of the Pathet Lao ever since they joined the coalition. With Souphanouvong riding herd over all of its delegates, the council will almost certainly become a rubberstamp Pathet Lao law-making body. [redacted]

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THAILAND - NORTH VIETNAM

A North Vietnamese delegation headed by Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Pham Hien arrives in Bangkok today to hold talks on normalizing relations with Thailand. Its arrival follows by one day the departure of a South Vietnamese communist delegation, which left Bangkok empty-handed after three days of negotiations.

The North Vietnamese clearly are anxious to exploit the recent strains in Thai-US relations and may arrive in Bangkok with unrealistically high expectations. Despite the Thai Foreign Ministry's strong desire to improve relations with Hanoi, prospects for a significant breakthrough, to include the establishment of diplomatic relations, do not appear good during this round of talks.

The Thai cabinet and other senior Thai officials suspect that one of Hanoi's main motives in the talks will be to drive a wedge between the US and Thailand. Perhaps with an eye toward North Vietnamese pressure on the issue of US troops, Prime Minister Khukrit said in a press conference on May 20 that a speedup in the withdrawal of US forces from Thailand would pose more problems for Thailand than for the US. The Thai also expect that Hanoi will press hard for the return of all South Vietnamese aircraft and ships still in Thailand. Chatchai initially favored meeting this demand, but was overruled by Prime Minister Khukrit and the senior military leadership during a meeting of the Thai National Security Council held on May 9.

Another obstacle to the normalization of relations is a long-standing Thai demand for the repatriation of Vietnamese refugees who have been living in northeast Thailand for some 30 years. An outbreak of anti-Vietnamese demonstrations in the northeast this past week was almost certainly inspired by government officials from outside the Foreign Ministry who are determined to remind Hanoi of Bangkok's own political conditions for improved relations.

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PORUGAL

The Portuguese Armed Forces Movement yesterday issued a statement criticizing all political parties, including the Communists, warning that the parties should completely align themselves with the Movement's policies.

To show its unhappiness with the continuing dissension between the Communists and the Socialists, the government yesterday closed down the Socialist paper taken over by Communist printers on Monday. The printers were protesting the publishing of a Communist document outlining charges party workers planned to use in a new purge of non-Communists from the government-owned radio and television network.

Two thousand Socialists, including party leader Soares, staged an all-night vigil to protest the Communist takeover. Information Minister Jesuino condemned the vigil as a "divisionist maneuver whose only aim appeared to be the sabotage of the Portuguese revolution." The government ordered that the paper remain closed pending a decision by a special press tribunal. The Socialists last night presented an ultimatum to President Costa Gomes: unless the Communists stop trying to take over the press trade unions and local governments, the Socialists will leave the government.

Taking a swipe at the extreme left as well, the armed forces general assembly approved a statement deplored the "divisionist and counterrevolutionary nature" of the outlawed Reorganizing Movement of the Proletariat Party. Press reports indicate that members of the Reorganizing Movement had beaten up two US Marine guards in Lisbon Monday night.

The general assembly also announced in a communique that civil unrest in Portugal is being provoked by "the forces of reaction and groups of leftist provocateurs" to divert the Movement's attention from the events in Angola. The emphasis on Angola in the communique highlights the military's serious concern over the deteriorating situation in Angola and its possible implications for the metropole. The statement also signals an awareness of the breakdown in order in Portugal and suggests that the Movement is looking for an excuse to cover up its inability to handle partisan difficulties.

The assembly, which will convene again soon to complete its work, also established a military tribunal to try those charged with complicity in the coup attempt on March 11. The commission that investigated the abortive coup was officially praised by the assembly, but the widely rumored effort to use the March 11 issue to remove moderate military leaders apparently did not develop.

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LEBANON

Militia of the right-wing Phalanges Party and the fedayeen clashed in Beirut yesterday, leaving at least three persons dead and 20 injured. This was the first significant violation of the April 16 cease-fire that ended four days of fighting between the two groups.

According to press reports from Beirut, government security forces moved quickly to set up roadblocks to contain the violence, which was centered in an area where a Beirut suburb abuts a Palestinian refugee camp.

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The government's action was designed to prevent widespread clashes such as occurred last month, when more than 150 persons were killed. Ineffective handling of that incident raised religious and political tensions and ultimately forced the resignation of Prime Minister Sulh.

There is no evidence that the Lebanese army or the major fedayeen groups were involved in the fighting yesterday. For the most part, both stayed on the sidelines last month, and only last week President Franjiyah and PLO Chairman Arafat agreed to safeguards designed to protect against their being dragged into hostilities initiated by radicals on either side.

Even repeated clashes between the Phalangists and the radical fedayeen at the present time, however, could lead to calls for changes in the country's delicately balanced system of government. Sulh, who is serving as caretaker prime minister, has already called for such changes and has openly sided with the Palestinians against the Phalangists.

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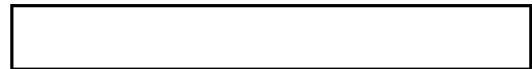
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